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SPRING BLOSSOMS…

MISS EAU CLAIRE/SODUS/DOWAGIAC TAYLOR COSTANZA IS MISS BLOSSOMTIME 2026

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Village council hears audit report

APPROVES STREET CLOSURES FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

BY THERESE DONNELLY

At the start of their April 8 meeting, the Three Oaks Village Council heard a presentation on the proposed millage to continue funding the local schools.

River Valley Area Schools Superintendent Dave Campbell explained the proposed 18 mills will not increase taxes and will primarily apply to industrial and rental properties, and second homes. Primary residences will not be affected. He said the millage is important because River Valley does not receive funding from the State of Michigan due to high property values.

The vote for the millage will be May 5. More information on the millage can be found at rivervalleyschools.org, information on voting can be found at berriencounty.org/156/elections.

During the meeting, the council received a report from Derek Hall of the Michigan Department of Treasury on the most recent village audit.

Hall told the council that, despite several projects involving village infrastructure, the village had broken even overall and was in good financial shape. He noted that the street fund had increased while the water fund had decreased but was still "in good condition."

There were a few line items that wound up going over budget by $1000-2000, but Hall said those mainly came down to changes in accounting procedures and he did not find the items significant.

Village Manager Dan Faulkner told the council he and Village Attorney Charles Hilmer had submitted an amendment to the purchase agreement on the village lot at 112 N. Elm Street before the village sells the lot to Bridget and Tad Verdun, who own the adjacent property.

Faulkner did not elaborate on the change but did say it was a separate tweak from the Verduns' agreement to pay closing costs.

The council approved a five-year agreement with Lakeshore Recycling and Disposal for trash and recycling removal in the village.

Oaks Eatery has requested the use of the public parking lot at 3 S. Elm St for Cars and Coffee for car enthusiasts to meet the second Saturday of each month from April through September. Police Chief Carl Krause told the council he had not yet been informed of the plan but felt it would use the lot much like the seasonal farmers markets. He said he had no objections to the lot being used.

The council approved the request.

The School of American Music requested a brief street closure for a planned event to promote kindness and empathy. The school asked for a section of North Elm to be closed June 21 so students and community members can walk from the school on Maple Street along Elm to Central Ave and ending in Dewey Canon Park for a performance. Faulkner said street construction is due to start soon, and any street closure would depend on the construction schedule.

The Downtown Development Authority received Jim Dygas' resignation at their April 1 meeting. The council voted to accept Dygas' resignation and appointed Johanna Welter to complete his term, which runs until April 2028.

For kids, it's not I watch and learn—
it's I watch and do.
— Dino N. Fatouros

Local Government Meetings

New Buffalo Times

Democracy Requires Transparency

CITY OF NEW BUFFALO
VANCE PRICE, MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL
MARK ROBERTSON, ROGER LIJEWSKI, KAREN GEAR, RICH KNOLL, VANCE PRICE
City Council meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30PM
CITY OF NEW BUFFALO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD
HOWARD MALES, MICHELLE HEIT, MICHELLE HANNON, PATTY IAZZETTO, BARBARA ANDERSON
Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM
SHERIFF BERRIEN COUNTY
Sheriff, Chuck Heit
Undersheriff, Greg Sanders
NEW BUFFALO AREA RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
Meets at 9AM on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (odd) at New Buffalo Township Hall, 17425 Red Arrow Highway New Buffalo
NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS BOARD
LISA WERNER, JOHN HASKINS, DENISE CHURCHILL, JENNIFER SUMMERS, VANESSA THUN, STEPHEN DONNELLY, GREG VOSBERG
The Board meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 6PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP BOARD
DAVID BUNTE, PAULA DUDIAK, LIZ RETTIG, RICHARD SULLIVAN, ARTHUR ANDERSON
Chikaming Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM
THREE OAKS
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7PM
VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
GRAND BEACH
Meets on the 3rd Wednesday at 5PM EST
KIMBERLY WOLNIK, CLERK-TREASURER
HARRY WALDER, JACK GRACE, ED SEBASTIAN, PETER DOERR, EDWARD BRANDES
MICHIANA
VILLAGE OF MICHIANA COUNCIL
Meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 1PM

Chikaming Township Board approves amending ordinance regarding alcoholic beverages

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Members of the Chikaming Township Board of Trustees approved moving forward with amending Section 5 under Ordinance 126 to allow alcoholic beverages at this year's Harbert Park Summer Concert Series or township sanctioned events at their Thursday, April 9, meeting.

Township Supervisor David Bunte said the change, which would be looked at by township attorney Charles Hilmer, to the ordinance would be made at the May meeting.

Township Supervisor David Bunte said that the township sanctioned event could be at any township public park.

Parks Director Joe Martin said that the Michigan Liquor Control Commission does require a fenced in area where beer or wine would be sold or where tickets would be exchanged for the beer and wine.

No one underage would be allowed into the fenced in area. Martin said that police chief Todd Taylor has experience dealing with the enforcement side of it, ensuring that identification is checked.

Martin said the fenced-in area would be in front of the old concession stand, which he broke off into a 100-foot square area.

"And then they (concertgoers) would have to stay in there if they have an open container," he said.

Martin said sales wouldn't involve liquor but only beer and wine.

Martin said he's identified five local retailers to supply alcohol for this summer's five concerts, which would include Fulcra Brewing Company in Harbert for the first one, Mangata Beer Co. in Union Pier for the second one and Lake Time Brewing in Bridgman for the third one.

Board members approved Martin moving forward with applying for five special licenses for the five concerts for alcohol sales.

The confirmed concert lineup this summer is Weko Boys for June 27, Edgar Wilbury Experience for July 25, P.S. Dump Your Boyfriend for Aug. 15 and Dart Board Compromise for Aug. 29. At a previous meeting, Martin said he's also secured some food trucks.

Bunte said the Medic One Board approved a funding model that has a $25,000 base fee for each of the 24 units and takes into account 60 percent call volume, 30 percent population and 10 percent SEV.

He added that the model will save the township $4,000 and the annual cost will be $85,633, an anticipated increase for which the township had previously budgeted.

A new Berrien Street Beach Access for Heavy Equipment Policy and Permit Application were approved.

Changes include responsibility lying with the parks director instead of the former park board and then approval from the township board to gain access. The time frame of no access to the lakefront being allowed from Memorial Day to Labor Day hasn't changed. In the case of an emergency or a safety-related issue, Bunte will make the call.

The board approved the engineering portion of the Pier Street Beach proposal from Abonmarche, which was conditional on the Berrien County Road Department and Berrien County Board of Commissioners approving their costs associated with the project. Bunte said Berrien County Road Department Interim Engineering Supervisor Marco Tomasi said the project wasn't included in the 2026 budget and that they were "in limbo" until the board approved going forward with it, which could be next spring.

Board members approved 2026 Berrien County Road Department projects, which include updated estimated costs associated with the projects totaling $551,302.

Board members approved a contract with Amish Builders to do the reframing and paneling of the entryway of Chikaming Center for an estimated cost of $36,817.04.

Due to the rough winter and the design of the entryway foyer, which features semicircular roofing, ice dams have formed, which has resulted in a lot of leakage into the lobby, walls and office.

Work being done would involve an extension of the entryway back to the roofline to create new rooflines and to minimize or eliminate the ice flow damage.

The most important decision you make is to be in a good mood. — *Voltaire*

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OPINION

A Plan Without a Playbook: Why Chikaming's Master Plan Deserves More Clarity

BY JOHN BELL

After reviewing Chikaming Township's proposed Master Plan, the housing study prepared by Bowen National Research, and the Future Land Use map with its Transitional Overlay areas, one thing becomes clear: the Plan speaks thoughtfully about preserving rural character, protecting farmland, and addressing housing needs, but falls short in explaining how that vision will be carried out.

At the heart of the issue is the absence of clear, practical guidance for how farmland should transition to residential use. The proposed Master Plan introduces large Transitional Overlay areas, many of which include active farmland adjacent to existing neighborhoods. Yet the Plan does not define how these transitions should occur or establish a consistent framework to guide future decisions.

A Master Plan should provide direction before proposals are brought forward, not leave key decisions open to interpretation after conflict has already begun. Without defined expectations for density, buffering, or development patterns, decisions risk becoming subjective rather than grounded in proven planning principles.

Recent experience underscores why these concerns matter. The 2025 proposed Sawyer Fields development, consisting of 22 home sites on approximately 15 acres between existing low-density homes and active farmland, became a clear example of how strongly residents feel about protecting agricultural land and rural character. Community sentiment played a significant role in challenging that proposal, which the Township ultimately did not approve.

Just as with Sawyer Fields, the concern is not theoretical. The addition of a Transitional Overlay in this same area could give future development proposals greater policy support, even though the Plan still lacks clear guidance for how farmland transitions should occur.

The location of the Transitional Overlay areas reinforces the impression that they are intended primarily to signal future residential growth. There are virtually no comparable overlays along commercial corridors that would suggest retail, commercial, or industrial expansion. Yet the Plan does not clearly state this intent or establish a framework for how such growth should be managed.

These Transitional Overlay areas are not just lines on a map. They are likely to shape rezoning requests, land use interpretations, and policy decisions for years to come. That is exactly why the Plan should explain their purpose, planning basis, and intended effect with much greater clarity.

That concern becomes even more significant when viewed alongside the Township's housing study. Although the rezoning of 15 acres of farmland for Sawyer Fields was not approved, the Bowen housing report identifies it as the only proposed for-sale housing development in Chikaming Township, yet provides little detail regarding pricing, product type, or timing. The report then shifts to a broader inventory of "development opportunity" sites that are not tied to actual proposals or demonstrated demand.

The Sawyer Fields proposal was presented as affordable housing, yet the Planning Commission required no enforceable guarantees to ensure that it would remain affordable. That example shows why the Master Plan needs clearer standards. Without them, affordability may remain more of an aspiration than an outcome that can be realistically achieved.

The housing study also points to a broader reality. Chikaming Township has experienced population decline and is projected to continue that trend. The population is older, and the housing market is heavily influenced by seasonal and second homes. More than half of the housing stock is classified as seasonal or recreational, meaning it is not available for full-time residents.

That reality reframes the housing conversation. The issue is not simply supply, but availability, affordability, and how housing is being used. If the market is driven by second home ownership and short-term rental demand, the Township should be cautious about assuming that simply creating more development opportunity will produce a different result.

If the Township intends for future development to support housing attainable for residents and workers, the Plan should be more specific about how that outcome will be achieved. Without tools such as occupancy requirements, deed restrictions, or limits on short-term rentals, new development may not serve the purpose residents are being told it will serve.

The Plan also gives too little attention to the environmental and watershed implications of transitioning farmland to residential use. Converting farmland to roads, driveways, and rooftops increases runoff, alters drainage patterns, and creates impacts beyond individual sites. Residential yards placed next to active farmland can also create predictable conflicts involving dust, noise, odors, and pesticide drift. These issues deserve more explicit treatment in the Plan.

Another area where greater clarity would be helpful is how community input has been incorporated into the Plan. The Planning Commission has emphasized public engagement, and many residents have participated in good faith. At the same time, many residents have offered reasonable, legitimate recommendations throughout this process, particularly regarding farmland transitions, buffering, density, and rural character, drawing on well-established planning principles promoted by organizations such as the Urban Land Institute and the American Planning Association. Yet there is little visible evidence in the current draft that those recommendations have been meaningfully incorporated into the Plan. Providing specific examples of how resident feedback influenced the Plan would help demonstrate that the process is not simply a series of meetings, but a genuine acknowledgement that community views matter.

In the end, the lack of clarity is not difficult to identify or address. The housing data does not support broad new residential expansion. The Transitional Overlay signals hundreds of acres for potential residential growth, yet the Plan does not define how that growth should occur. The treatment of Sawyer Fields in the housing study raises further questions about whether development opportunities are being advanced without clear alignment to market demand or community priorities.

Practical issues involving drainage, watershed impacts, agricultural interface, and long-term land use compatibility also have not been adequately addressed.

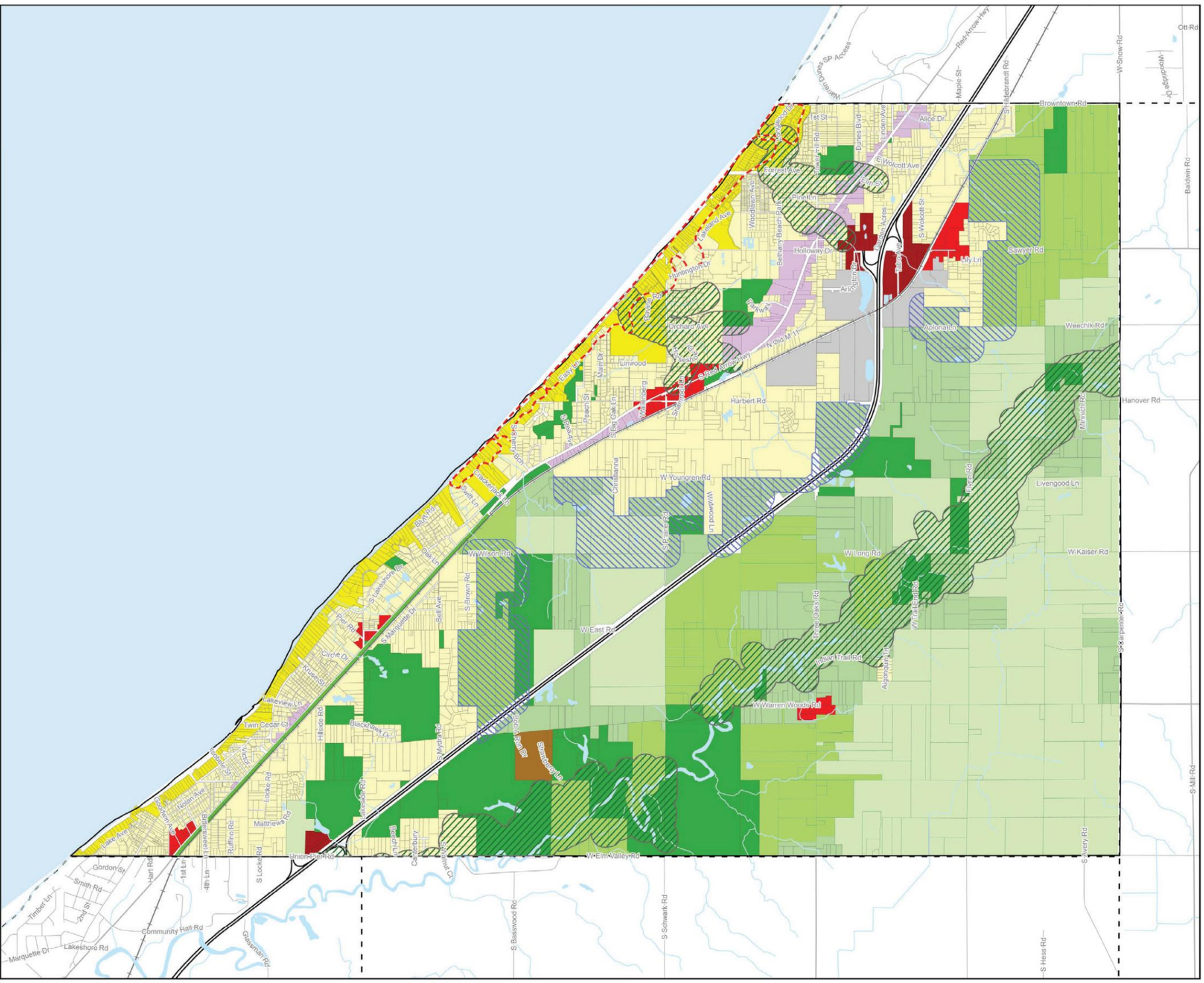
The Chikaming Master Plan should be more than a collection of good intentions. It should serve as a practical playbook that helps a community achieve its goals without ambiguity or inconsistency. It should provide the roadmap necessary to turn those values into sound decisions.

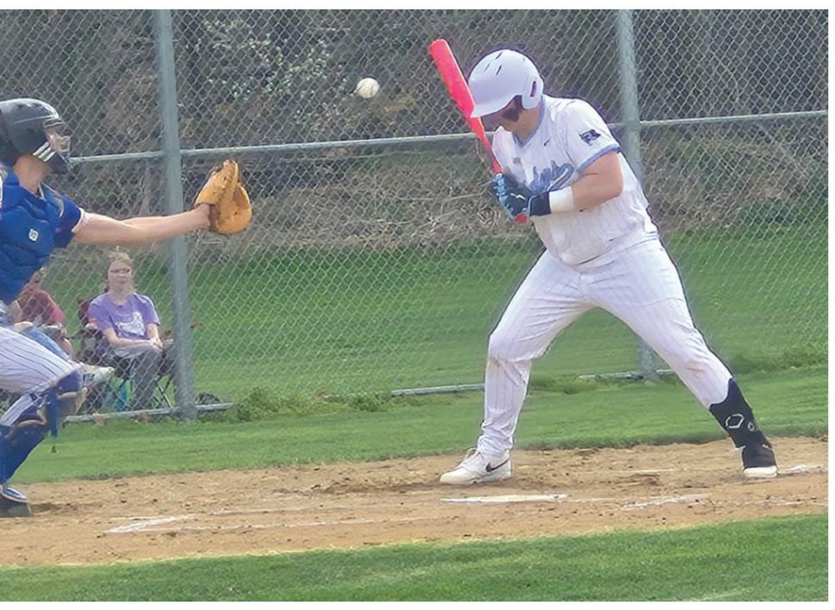
If you are a full-time or part-time Chikaming resident, your opinion matters. This Master Plan will shape the Township for many years to come, and it should reflect the voices of those who live here, invest here, and care about its future. The current Master Plan draft and housing study are posted on the front page of Chikaming Township's website. Please review them and, if you would like to weigh in, now is the time to speak up before the Plan is finalized.

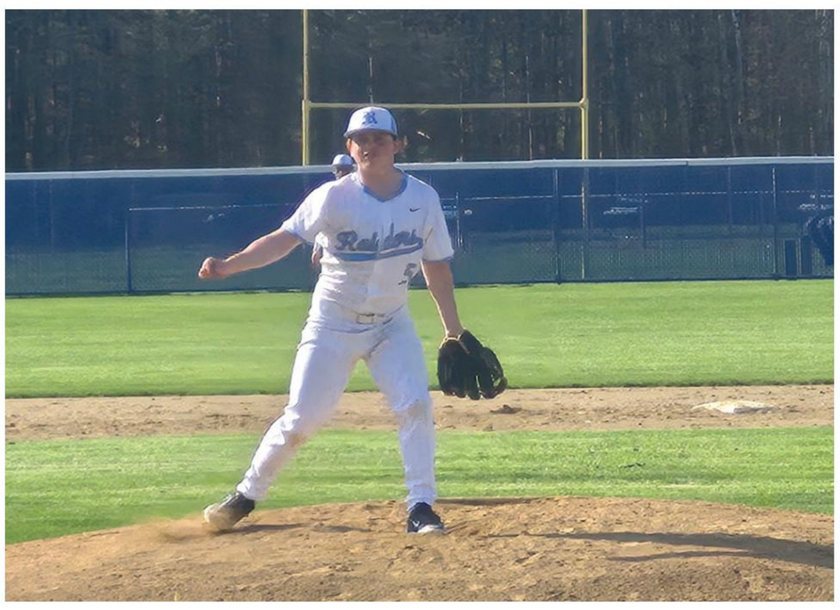
Postscript:

Since first writing this op-ed, recent events have only reinforced these concerns. During the current public review period, meetings have been scheduled with limited notice, Township officials have continued to revise portions of the draft, and residents have had little opportunity for meaningful dialogue. At these so-called workshops, residents are largely expected to sit and listen while changes are made to the document in real time, without meaningful consideration of past or present public input. That does not reflect a review process in which resident comments are being taken seriously.

John Bell is a Chikaming Township resident and longtime commercial real estate professional with more than 30 years of experience in real estate development and land use planning.







Raiders still unbeaten after doubleheader sweep

BY STAN MADDUX

The Red Arrow Raiders remain undefeated after a doubleheader sweep at home Tuesday in high school baseball.

The Raiders (7-0) beat Our Lady of the Lake Catholic School 5-0 and 9-1 at River Valley High School.

In the first game, Raiders' starting pitcher senior Ryan Ender gave up just one hit while striking out nine batters in going the distance.

Head Coach Ryan McCarty said Ender is not overpowering but he keeps hitters off balance with a mixture of well-placed fastballs, curves, change-ups and sliders.

"He's one of our top guys. He just continues to prove himself," he said.

The Raiders had a chance to score first in the third inning but junior Jeff Tertel hit into a force play with the bases loaded and two outs.

The next inning, though, the Raiders scored after Aiden Miller led-off with a single down the third base line then advanced to second base on a sacrifice bunt.

While trying to reach third base on the same play, the first baseman tried throwing him out but the ball went over the third baseman's head allowing Miller to cross home plate.

The Raiders led off the next inning with a single from sophomore Brody Nikkel, who was later driven home on a single to center field by senior Nick Wolfe.

Wolfe later scored on a single up the middle by Tertel.

The Raiders struck again in the sixth inning when Nikkel with runners on second base and third base moving laid down a bunt with one out.

Nikkel was thrown out but the baserunners, junior Lucas Thun and sophomore Colten Lijewski, scored with Lijewski sliding into home just before the catcher after grabbing the throw from the first baseman laid down the tag.

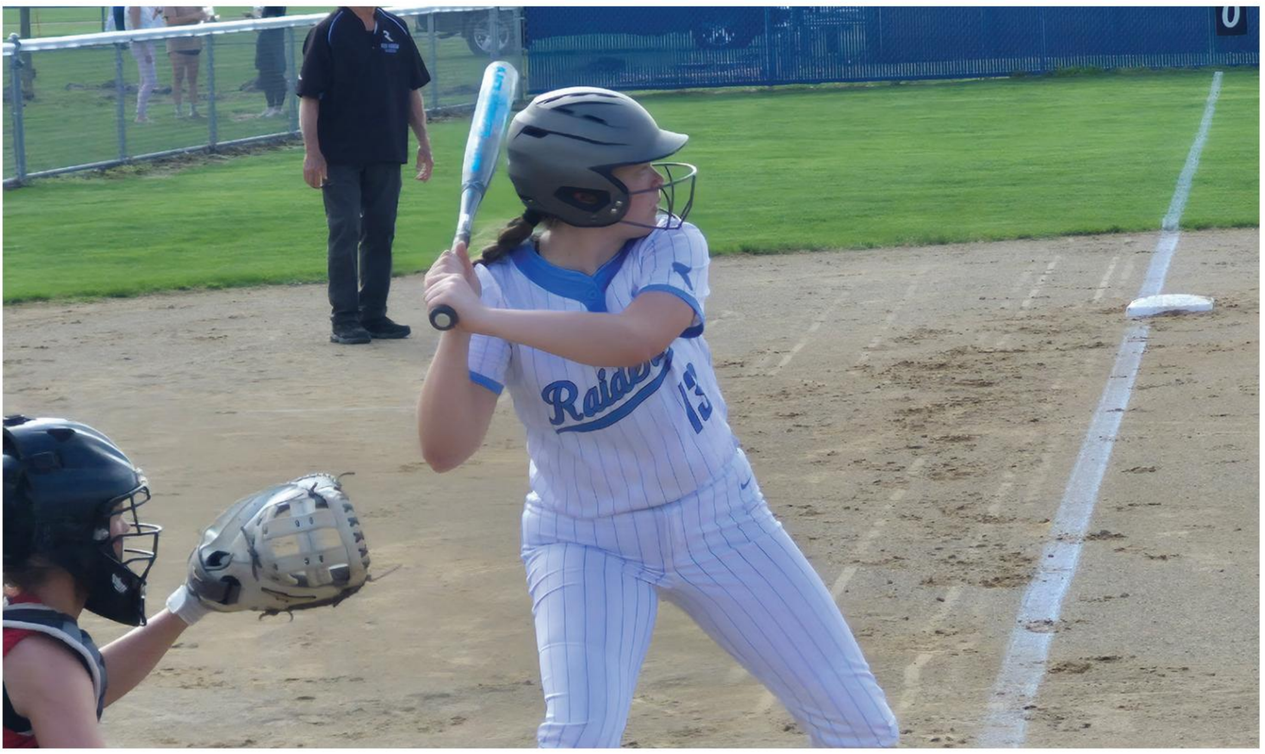
The sweep came just three days after the Raiders won a three-team tournament at Bridgman.

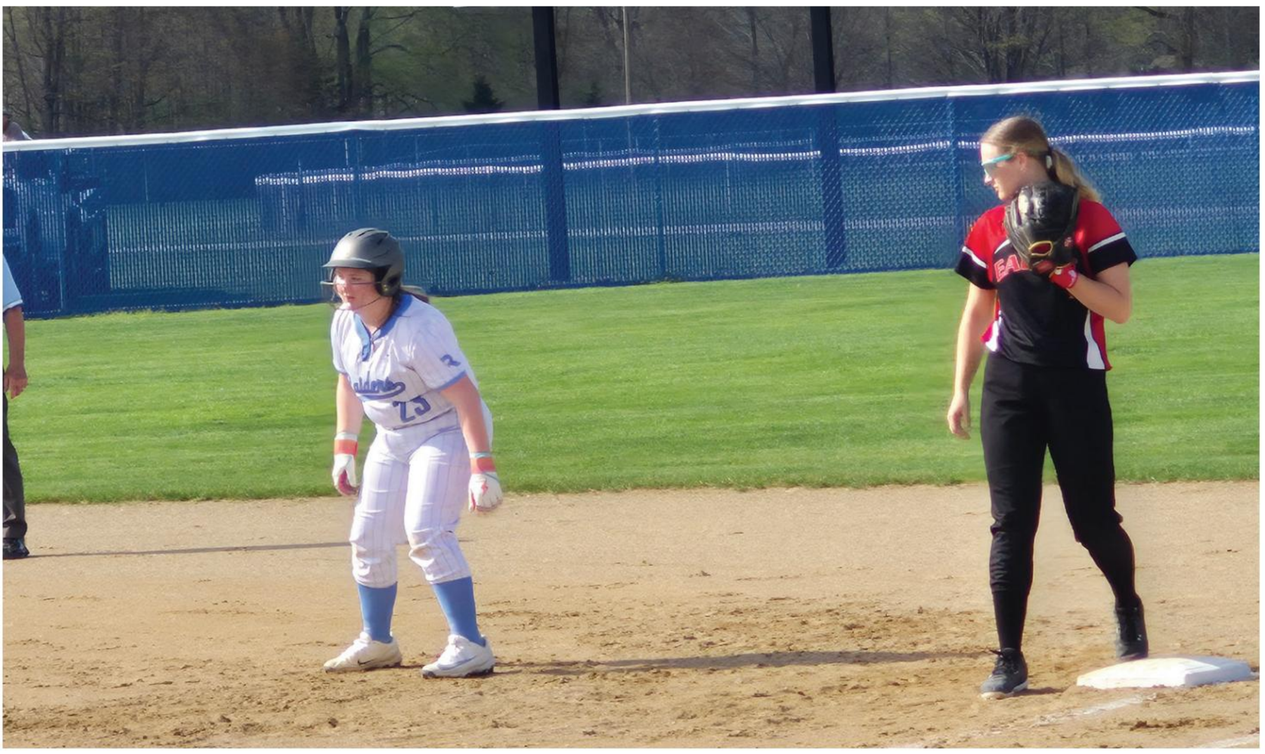
The Raiders defeated Bridgman 3-2 and Marcellus 3-1 to bring home the trophy.

McCarty said the tournament win came despite some fielding mistakes and control problems at times from his pitchers.

"We were able to withstand some mistakes and some walks. Fortunately, we came out on top," he said.

I start early and I stay late, day after day, year after year, it took me 17 years and 114 days to become an overnight success. — *Lionel Messi*





Raiders heating up in girls' softball

BY STAN MADDUX

The Red Arrow Raiders cruised to victory in the first game but had to work much harder in the second game for a doubleheader sweep at home Tuesday in girls' high school softball.

The Raiders defeated Howardsville Christian 18-3 and 12-10 at River Valley High School.

In the first game, the Raiders exploded for seven runs in the first inning beginning with a run scoring line drive double down the third base line by junior Johnna Rochefort.

Rochefort was driven home on a triple by sophomore Addison Lynch.

The next three batters walked and were driven home on a single to center field by senior Brianna Taylor and double from freshman Adalyn Russell.

The Raiders scored three more times the next inning with help from another triple by Lynch, who scored on a passed ball from the pitcher.

Walks and a wild pitch factored into the next two runs crossing home plate.

Another eight runs crossed the plate for the Raiders in the bottom of the third inning on hits that included another double for Rochefort and an inside the park home run from Lynch.

Ella Lijewski, a 14 year old freshman, went the distance for the Raiders.

Head Coach Erick Rochefort said Lijewski already has the ability to pitch quality innings at the varsity level and filled a need for pitching depth prior to the start of the season.

"She obviously needs to learn more but for where she is right now, she's done very well," he said.

Russell, despite her young age, has also been a great addition to the team.

Rochefort said she's a strong lead-off hitter because of her ability to make contact with the ball and run.

"She's really starting to fill that role," he said.

Senior Greta Vollman pitched the first six innings of the second game before replaced by sophomore Rylee Rudolph, who was credited with a save.

The Raiders, who made it to the District 4 championship game last year, began the season by losing a doubleheader to a very good Bridgman team.

The Raiders have won every game since except for a 11-1 tournament loss on Saturday to Bridgman.

"We are definitely bouncing back," said Rochefort, who lost just two seniors from last year's 20 win season club.

Miss Eau Claire/Sodus/ Dowagiac Taylor Costanza is Miss Blossomtime 2026

MR. BLOSSOMTIME IS MR. ST. JOSEPH DOMINICK LIGNELL

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

A lot of people made it possible for Taylor Costanza to be crowned the 93rd Miss Blossomtime at the Lake Michigan College Mendel Center in Benton Harbor Monday, April 13.

When posed with the question by co-emcee Phil McDonald on what she would say in a thank-you note to the Blossomtime Festival staff, Taylor Costanza said she'd thank them "for all the work and time they put in – they truly are so encouraging backstage."

"All the volunteers back there truly, truly put in so much hard work to make sure we all come out here and look our very best," she said.

Taylor, who was chosen out of a pool of 20 other community queens, also thanked her mother and father, who were "the very best parents they could be in this situation," her friends and her chairperson, who was her "biggest support throughout this whole thing."

The daughter of Jennifer and Brett Costanza, 17-year-old Taylor is from the community of Eau Claire/Sodus/Dowagiac. A senior at St Joseph High School, Taylor plans to attend Michigan State University to become a travel nurse. She's a four-year Honor Roll student, a member of the National Honor's Society, 4H Club Vice President and Secretary and Rugby Team Captain and MVP. She also participates in the Girls Flag Football and is dual enrolled at Lake Michigan College.

Joining her is first runner-up, Miss Hartford Brianna Friedrich. Brianna is a 17-year-old senior at Hartford High School and is the daughter of Sherry and Todd Friedrich. She plans to attend Lake Michigan College for two years in the Social Work Program and then continue her education at Western Michigan University.

Second runner-up, Miss Watervliet Emma Birkhead, is the 17-year-old daughter of Angela Gendron and Kevin Birkhead. She is a senior at Hartford High School. After graduation, she plans to attend Douglas J. Institute to earn her cosmetology license, then further her education to become a kindergarten teacher.

Crowned Miss Congeniality is 17-year-old Miss South Haven, Maya Gonzalez. She is the daughter of Janet Aguero and Anthony Gonzalez. She is a senior at South Haven High School. Maya plans to attend the University of Illinois Chicago for Orthodontic Dentistry.

Crowned the 29th Mr. Blossomtime out of a pool of 29 other kings during the Mr. Blossomtime and

Miss New Buffalo Angelina Bryk perfotms her Sun-in commercial

Miss Bridgman Kate Starbuck

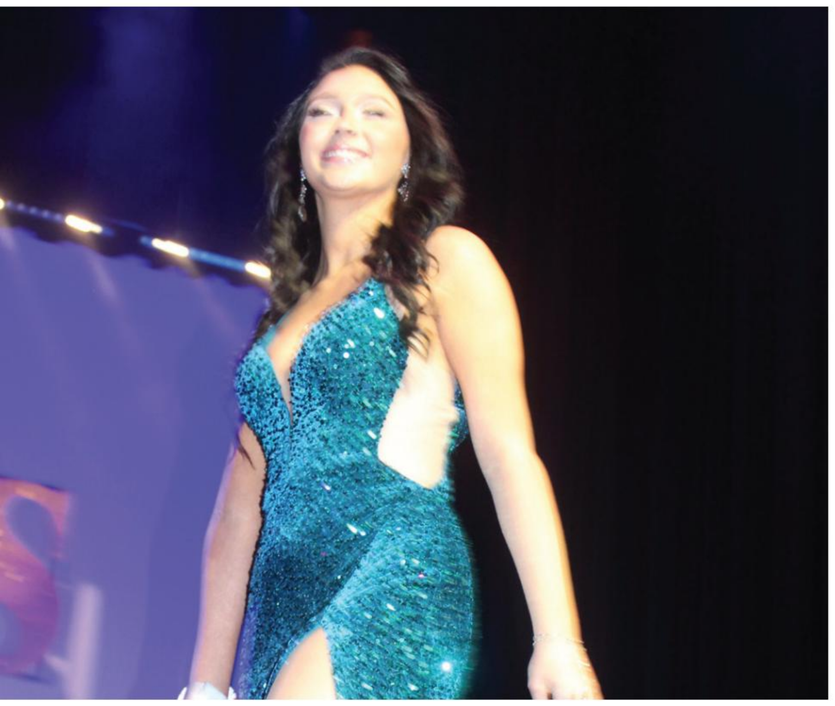
Miss New Buffalo Angelina Bryk models her Dublin, Ireland ensemble

Mr. Three Oaks and River Valley Clayton Burk introduces himself

Miss Three Oaks and River Valley Johnna Rochefort performs her Tootsie Pop commercial

Miss Bridgman Kate Starbuck performs during the commercial segment

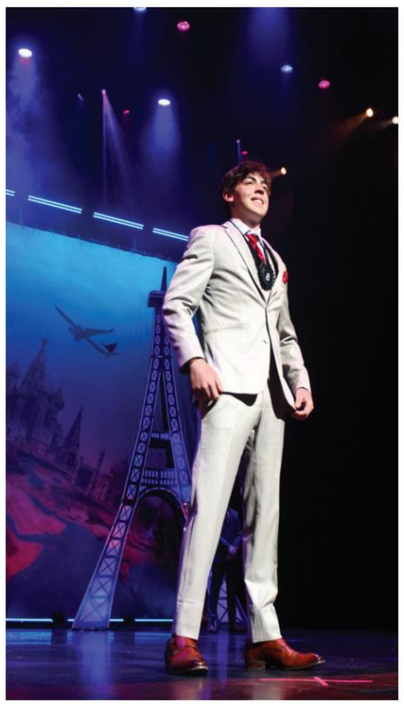
Miss Blossomtime Ava Starbuck and her court say farewell



Miss New Buffalo Angelina Bryk

Miss Three Oaks and River Valley Johnna Rochefort

The queens perform an opening number



Mr. Bridgman Kaden Gipson

The Mr. Blossomtime court takes the stage

Mr. Bridgman Kaden Gipson models Munich, Germany attire

Showcase of Queens pageant Sunday, April 12, was Dominick Lignell from St. Joseph.

Upon being crowned, Dominick gave thanks to God because "if it wasn't for Him, none of this would be possible," as well as his parents, the volunteers and his fellow kings.

"Honestly, it's been an amazing journey to get to know every single person on this court," he said.

An 18-year-old junior at St Joseph High School, Dominick is the son of Rosalinda Brink and Matthew Lignell of St Joseph. Dominick plans to pursue a career as a skilled electrician, with a long-term goal of owning his own electrical company. He is an Honor Roll student, a representative for the statewide Be NICE mental health awareness program, and a member of DECA. Dominick also participates in varsity football, varsity track and field and is enrolled in the Early Middle College program.

Joining him is first runner-up, Beau Kirtdoll, a 17-year-old junior at Niles High School and the son of Erika and Timmy Kirtdoll. His goal is to earn admission to the University of Michigan to pursue a career in business, specifically specializing in Entrepreneurship and Finance.

Antonio Jordan, a 19-year-old senior at Berrien Springs High School was crowned second runner up. He is the son of Natasha Jordan and Sondra Staggs and will be attending Western Michigan University in the fall to pursue a career in the arts.

Crowned Mr. Nice Guy was Giovanni Ayala, a 17-year-old senior at Watervliet High School. The son of Luz Perez and Cipriano Ayala, he plans to become a Mechanical Engineer.

Mr. Bridgman Kaden Gipson was among the one of the top five finalists.

Mr. Three Oaks/River Valley Clayton Burk earned a Lake Shore Masonic Lodge No. 298 Benton Harbor Scholarship as well as a State Farm Good Neighbor Scholarship Sunday night.

Miss Bridgman Kate Starbuck earned a Modeling Award as well as one for the best overall poster board.

The Miss People's Choice was Miss New Buffalo Angelina Bryk.

Judges for the Mr. Blossomtime pageant were Brandy Godush-Cox, Hunter Ackerman, and Corbin Wagner.

Judges for the Showcase of Queens pageant were Sin'Cere Taylor, Marylynne Dittmer, and Calvin Williamson.

Judges for the Miss Blossomtime pageant were Bret McAtee, Lisa Bowman Walters, and Steve Spears.

The theme of this year's pageant was "Blossomtime...Oh the places you will see." Former Miss Blossomtime 1988, Lanie Lu Von Behren and the Lady of the Lake Athletic Director, Phil McDonald emceed both pageants.

The Blossomtime Festival is the oldest and largest multi-community Festival in the state of Michigan, with this year marking its 120th celebration.

Drunk driving alleged in motorcycle fatality

BY STAN MADDUX

A suspected drunk driver is accused of causing a collision that claimed the life of a man on a motorcycle in Michigan City.

Keith Starnes, 45, of Michigan City was charged Tuesday in La Porte Superior Court 1 with Level 5 felony reckless homicide and Class A misdemeanor operating while intoxicated.

Police said Matthew Castellanos, 23, of LaCrosse suffered extensive head trauma.

He was pronounced dead after the Sunday night collision at nearby Franciscan Health.

According to police, the investigation revealed Starnes turned left into the path of the oncoming motorcycle on Franklin St. just north of Interstate 94.

The motorcycle traveling close to normal speeds ran into the passenger side of Starnes' mini-van, police said.

Police said the results of a portable breathalyzer along with various physical symptoms from Starnes indicated he was highly impaired by alcohol.

He refused to take a certified blood alcohol test, forcing a judge to issue a search warrant for a blood sample that's being sent to an Indiana State Police laboratory for analysis.

Additional charges could be filed depending on the blood test results, which could take a few weeks to come in, said La Porte County Prosecutor Sean Fagan.

La Porte County Coroner Lynn Swanson said a blood sample will also be taken from the victim during an autopsy, which is standard procedure in any motor vehicle fatality.

A Writer's Life...

DURING THE GOLDEN AGE OF TELEVISION ANIMATION

BY JACK OLESKER

The Great White Way, Joan's Way

Two years after we finished taping Predicaments, on June 16th, I was in the passenger compartment of a black limousine parked outside the Royale Theater after attending a performance of David Mamet's Broadway Speed-the-Plow. David Mamet is a renowned Chicago born writer-director (The Untouchables, The Postman Always Rings Twice, Glengarry Glen Ross).

Joan Rivers had arranged for the limo to be waiting after the play ended. We had seats at different places in the theater and the plan was that she'd join me after the play ended and we'd go out for "a bite to eat".

How this came to be still, all these years later, astonishes me.

I was in my office at DIC and read Joan would be attending a performance of Speed-the-Plow. Seeing her name brought back great memories about working with her on Predicaments. On a whim, I decided to try calling her. Sitting across from our desks, Bobby Logan, who had written for Joan, scoffed, "You'll never get her on the phone." He had a point. Understand that making a cold call to a star of Joan Rivers' magnitude and actually getting her on the phone is the longest of long shots.

As I waited for yet another blocker to come on the line and send me further down the rabbit hole, Joan came on the other end bellowing, "JACK OLESKER?!"

That she even remembered my name knocked the stuffing out of me. I looked at Bobby and smiled. He returned to a script he was working on.

Now, as the chauffeur opened the door, Joan, in a full-length sable coat (and remember, this was June 16th!), scrambled into the backseat with me, carrying her much-loved Yorkshire terrier, Spike. We (Joan and me; not Spike) chatted non-stop and, despite her public persona, she gave me plenty of time to talk.

We arrived at a Broadway restaurant, Joan taking Spike in with her. "Spike goes wherever I go" she explained. After being effusively greeted by the maître d'and adoring waiters, we took our seats. After we'd ordered dinner, I asked Joan how she'd enjoyed the play. She said she loved it and, in an offhand manner, I said, "Of course you did. Written by David Mamet. I shouldn't even be allowed in the same theater where one of his plays is being performed."

The smile leaving her face, suddenly turning very serious, Joan locked eyes with me, lowered her voice and said, "Don't ever talk like that again." I waited. Then she said, "You're a fine writer, Jack. Don't ever put yourself down." She took a sip of her Martini and ended with, "Modesty is an over-rated virtue."

It was advice I never forgot. In the entertainment industry, if you don't toot – if you don't blare! – your own horn, then nobody else will do it for you.

Seconds later, returning to her smiling, bubbly Joan-mode, she asked, "Do you know what time it is?" As I started to look at my watch, she gently handed Spike to the maître d' and said, "I'll tell you what time it is! It's time to dance!"

Then she grabbed my hand and pulled me to the middle of the restaurant where, a band playing, we danced and danced and danced.

During my more than forty-year career in the motion picture and television business, filled with many high points, that evening spent with Hollywood legend Joan Rivers was one high point I will never forget...

HOROSCOPE

APRIL 16-22, 2026

AS INTERPRETED BY SANDY "STAR" BENDT

ARIES MARCH 21—APRIL 19

The winds of change are blowing and you are not the same person you used to be. Don't hang on to old patterns and ways of handling problems. Be prepared to face some opposition or be pushed to stand up for yourself. This is a character building experience that will show you where you stand.

TAURUS APRIL 20—MAY 20

The energy coming your way this week will be distributive to the peace and solitude you had hoped to have. Know that this is a highly charged vibe that could lead to disrupted sleep and general bad dreams. This is a good week to avoid crowds and avoid deep discussions. Stay home and make a nice meal.

GEMINI MAY 21—JUNE 21

Be prepared the people you generally count on to support you may not be able to follow through this week. This is a tough lesson in having to do things for yourself or having to do things you have never done before. There will be a lot of apprehension and uncertainty but you will have to move forward on your own.

CANCER JUNE 22—JULY 22

The winds of change are blowing and it's time to take a stand and accept the responsibilities you have. Don't just bow down or acquiesces to the actions of others. Follow through with consequences for violating boundaries This is a character building experience that will show you who's in charge.

LEO JULY 23—AUGUST 22

The energy coming your way this week will be very chaotic and people could really push your buttons now. This is the time to dive into learning and honing in on your talents. Avoid interactions with people and partners that require a lot of emotional input. Do things that are more mentally stimulating.

VIRGO AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22

Be prepared as the commitments people made to you in the past may not work out now. You may have to renegotiate some terms you would rather not budge on, but it will be necessary in order to get the job done or to secure resources. Don't get discouraged as this will turn out better than expected.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22

The winds of change are blowing and the people that you are intimately connected with will not be very easy to deal with now. Be prepared to balance out their volatile situations with creative humorous responses rather than in dramatic or angry ways that may contribute to their stress.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 21

The energy coming your way this week will be very unsettling and could easily upset the smooth seas you had hoped to traverse now. No matter how much you plan or contemplate, things will work out differently in the field. Let the unexpected be the catalyst that pushes you to a happier shore.

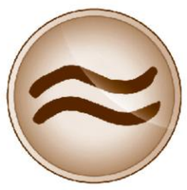
SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22—DECEMBER 21

Be prepared as feelings and creative projects could make a left turn this week. You may have to deal with stricter guidelines and limitations or sudden angry outburst and drama from siblings or coworkers. Don't let it get you down because it won't last long. Once the air clears, it will be good times again.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22—JANUARY 19

The winds of change are blowing and it's time to start being more protective of the nurturing vibe you carry. You may feel challenged or unappreciated and need to pull back in order to evaluate your level of input. This is a character building experience that will show you what's happening behind the scenes.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 18



The energy coming your way this week will be very antagonizing and could easily upset any discussions or plans you have with siblings or coworkers. The person you had hoped would be sympathetic or follow through may instead become hostile or act in opposition to previously agreed upon plans.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19—MARCH 20

Be prepared as investments and purchases may not go as planned this week. It's important for you to push for a better deal now. This is the time to haggle and go after the things you want. Make moves now if you are looking to sell your home or unveil your latest creation. Lady luck is on your side, by the way.

The greatest of follies is to sacrifice health for any other kind of happiness. — *Arthur Schopenhauer*

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Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

2	6	4						7
						2		
					9		5	
4	5			2				
							8	6
				5				
7		8			5		6	
	1	6			4			
5				1				

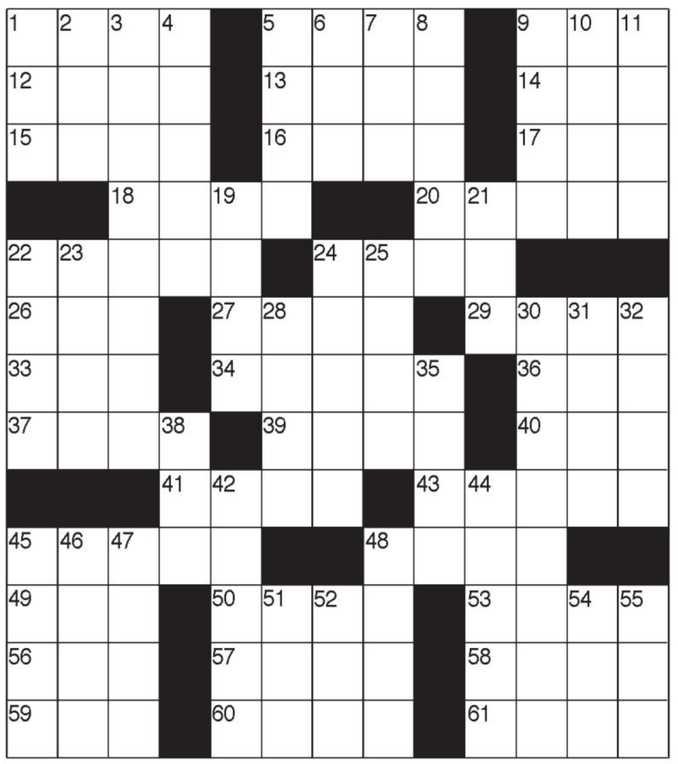
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (abbr.)
5 Thin strip of wood
9 Master of Business Administration (abbr.)
12 Butter tree
13 Rhyme scheme
14 Internet provider
15 Containers
16 Cut
17 Plant disease
18 Melville's captain
20 Pedestal for a bust
22 Prison
24 Old-style verb
26 Amer. sign language (abbr.)
27 Mild oath
29 Surgical needle
33 School course (abbr.)
34 Appointments
36 Deposed Ugandan dictator
37 Rate
39 River from Lake Baikal
40 Former capital of Serbia
41 S. Afr. town
43 Tuft
45 Arabic script
48 Tiber tributary
49 Peak
50 Clear broth (Scot.)
53 Among
56 Terrorist org. in the '70s
57 He (Lat.)
58 Unattended
59 Dolt
60 Affixes
61 Black as ink

DOWN

1 Revised Standard Version (abbr.)
2 Oriental tea
3 Tinny
4 Ottoman official
5 Baby goat
6 Aborigine (Austr.)
7 Fancy marble
8 Hovers
9 Husband (Fr.)
10 Favor
11 High (Lat.)
19 Ancient
21 Associate Technical Aide (abbr.)
22 Catch the breath
23 United States Code Annotated (abbr.)
24 Undesired
25 Gulf of Arabian Sea
28 Festivity
30 Warm spice
31 N. Caucasian language
32 Slushy ice
35 Kemo ____
38 Eskimo (abbr.)
42 Bone of leg
44 Arrow poison
45 Nat'l Aeronautics and Space Admin. (abbr.)
46 Building wings
47 Health resorts
48 Negatives
51 Retail liquor dealer (abbr.)
52 Long standing
54 Blacken
55 Algerian governor



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SAWYER STAPLE GREENBUSH BREWING CO. CLOSES

Greenbush Brewing Co. in Sawyer has closed after 14 years, the microbrewery announced in a Facebook post Tuesday, April 14.

Greenbush stated that they "could point to a lot of things in the world economy that finally brought us to a dead end, but everyone reads the news and looks around."

"The simple reality is that the restaurant world is hurting and we were no exception," the post said.

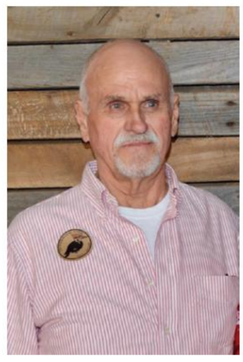
Founded by Scott Sullivan, Greenbush opened its doors in the former laundromat/video rental/candy counter in June 2011, according to its website. What started as a 32-person taproom was soon serving sandwiches, salads and soup. A full kitchen, patio and new brewing system were added in fall of 2013, with the taproom expanding for the second time.

The post thanked its supporters for allowing it to operate for "14 years, 10 months and three days." — STAFF REPORTS

OBITUARIES

Donald Stephen England

1942-2026



Donald Stephen England, 84, of Parma, Michigan, died peacefully, Monday, January 26, 2026, in the comfort of his family's presence.

His life began January 13, 1942 in Parma, Michigan, the youngest son of seven children born to Dennis and Lola England. He married Virginia Rimer of Concord, Michigan December 29, 1961 in Parma, Michigan.

Steve was an exceptional carpenter. He took meticulous care of his garden and yard. Steve loved animals, especially wildlife and birds. He was passionate about fishing until the end of his life. He loved baking cakes and cookies and generously sharing them with others. Steve was committed to caring for his family and friends, especially his wife Virginia. He loved to take her for rides and explore the Michigan countryside and backroads.

Steve will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his beloved wife of sixty-four years, one daughter, Terri (Gary George) England of Albany, Ohio, one son, Tim (Geordan Capes) England of Three Oaks, Michigan two sisters, Sandy Watters of Jackson, Michigan, Diana Putnam of Jackson, Michigan, two brothers, Chet England of Parma, Michigan, Ronald (Helen) England of Concord, Michigan, and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his parents, two brothers, Gary England and Larry Dean England.

Family and Friends will gather at a later time to be announced.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

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Lake Michigan College announces Dr. Ken Flowers as president

DR. LATOYA MASON NAMED INTERIM PROVOST

Lake Michigan College (LMC) is pleased to announce that Dr. Ken Flowers assumed the role of president on April 11, becoming the institution's next leader and continuing its strong tradition of student-centered excellence and community impact. Dr. Flowers will serve on a three-year contract with an annual salary of $222,000.

Dr. Flowers brings a deep commitment to higher education and a longstanding connection to Lake Michigan College. Having dedicated his career to the institution, he steps into the presidency with a clear vision for advancing student success, strengthening workforce partnerships, and expanding access to high-quality, affordable education across the region.

"I am honored to serve as president of Lake Michigan College and to continue the important work of empowering our students and communities," said Dr. Flowers. "LMC has long been a place where opportunity meets support, and I look forward to working alongside our talented faculty and staff to build on that foundation. Together, we will continue to innovate, grow, and ensure that every student has a clear pathway to their future."

As part of this leadership transition, Dr. LaToya Mason has been appointed interim provost. Dr. Mason currently serves as dean of health sciences and brings extensive academic leadership experience, a strong commitment to student achievement, and a deep understanding of workforce-aligned programming. Faculty, Nursing and Director of Nursing Denise Gardner will serve as interim dean of health sciences during this period, providing continuity of leadership within the division.

"Dr. Mason is a respected leader whose expertise and dedication to student success make her exceptionally well-suited for this role," said Dr. Flowers. "Her leadership will be instrumental in ensuring academic excellence and continuity during this transition."

Dr. Flowers succeeds Dr. Trevor Kubatzke, who has served as president for the past nine years and will transition to the role of President Emeritus. Under Dr. Kubatzke's leadership, Lake Michigan College expanded academic offerings, strengthened community and industry partnerships, and enhanced its role as a cornerstone of opportunity in southwest Michigan.

"It has been a privilege to serve Lake Michigan College and the communities we support," said Dr. Kubatzke. "I am proud of what we have accomplished together and confident that Dr. Flowers will continue to lead the college forward with integrity, vision, and a deep commitment to student success. The future of LMC is in excellent hands."

Dr. Kubatzke will continue to support the college during the transition period through December 2026.

Lake Michigan College remains committed to its mission of empowering people and communities to thrive through education, innovation, and experiences. With this leadership transition, the college is well-positioned to build on its momentum and continue delivering meaningful impact for students, employers, and the broader community. — STAFF REPORTS

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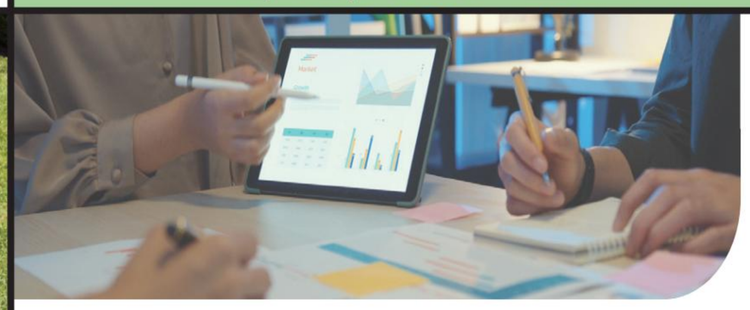
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To Your Health

COLUMN BY KAREN EDWARDS ND

A SILENT KILLER IN YOUR HOME

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that forms when uranium in the soil starts to break down and decay. It comes up through the ground and would normally dissipate into the air. The problem arises when it seeps through cracks in the foundation of your home. It collects and concentrates in the basement first, but thenmakes its way into the upper levels.

You cannot see, smell or taste radon. You can have a very serious radon problem and things appear perfectly fine and normal. Until someone begins to get sick. Breathing these radioactive particles in regularly over timecan damage your lungs. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer behind smoking. Radon poisoning is much higher to smokers because you are doubling up on the damage.

Radon exposure becomes dangerous over long-term, cumulative exposure, typically taking 5 to 25 years to cause lung cancer. Symptoms can also be due to other issues, but here are some that long term radon poisoning can cause. Persistent cough that doesn't go away. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. Chest pain or tightness, Frequent respiratory infections like bronchitis or pneumonia. Fatigue or weakness without clear cause. Unexplained weight loss over time. Coughing up blood.

Radon levels can fluctuate from day to day depending the weather. The average home in America has a radon level of about 1.3. A radon meter is easy to obtain, they are not that expensive, and they could save your life. You can purchase a radon meter at any home goods store to test your home. These will give you daily levels as well as long term average, which is what is important to know.

Opening windows and running fans seems like it should fix the problem. However, it does not. The weather affects how much radon leaks into your home. Wet weather traps the gasses underground and the pressure changes makeyour house the easiest place for it to come up into and get trapped. Basements are perfect storage tanks for radon to get trapped into. If you have a basement or a very tight insulated house, then you will want to test for radon.

Radon mitigation services offer free home consultationsand detect where radon may be entering your home for radon abatement.

If you know that you have exposure to ANY radiation (Your computers and cell phones) I would highlyrecommend taking seaweed. Kelp, Wakame, Hijiki, Brown seaweeds or Sea moss. These all have radiation protection due to their high iodine content. Iodine protects the thyroid from absorbing radioactive iodine. Their rich concentration of alginate, binds and removes radioactive heavy metals from the body. Sea moss is easy to take and not much of a taste.

Chlorella also binds to heavy metals and is a detoxing agent. Cilantro and cultured foods like kim chi and sauerkraut also help pull radiation out of the body. Staying well hydrated keeps things moving. These all support the immune system and recovery from radiation damage.

Disclaimer: Everything here is for nutritional education and is not meant to diagnose, treat prevent or cure. See your doctor when you have questions.

PET OF THE WEEK

BILLY RAY

"Meet Billy Ray! We think his namesake, the mullet-sporting, Achy Breaky Heart king himself, inspired his name! The guinea pig, Billy Ray, has longer fur on his tail and somewhat resembles a mullet! Ha ha, sort of! Anyway, whatever his name is, he's a charming fellow! Billy Ray loves snackies! Cucumbers, fruits (in moderation) and guinea pig chew sticks are his top choices. He loves to talk to you and will carry on a longer conversation the more comfortable he becomes! He hasn't been around other guinea pig buddies so we would encourage a slow, positive introduction if you have a male guinea pig who needs a friend! Billy Ray is about one year old. Come meet cutie!."

AVAILABLE AT THE MICHIANA HUMANE SOCIETY

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE
New Buffalo Times
— SINCE 1942 —

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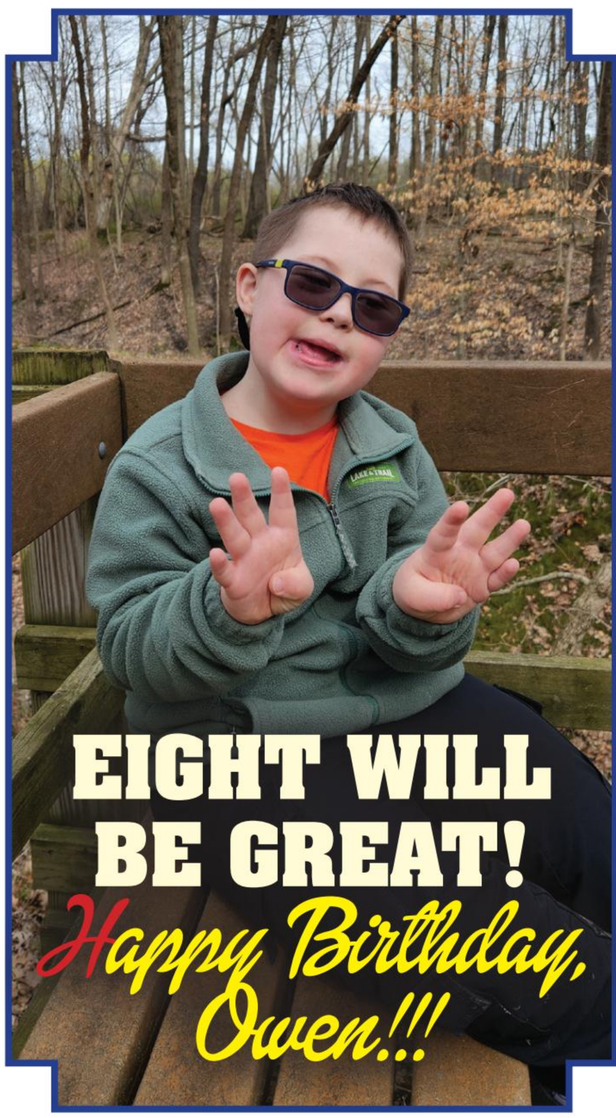

Matt Raney works on a piece at David's Delicatessen and Coffee at last year's Art Attack

Lalma V. Petrulls shows a mixed media piece to Regina Abate and Vida Sheehan at last year's Art Attack

Art Attack scheduled for next weekend

Once again, residents and visitors to the area can indulge in "All That Is Art" during the annual Art Attack weekend, which is scheduled for Friday through Sunday, April 24-26.

For the final weekend in April, art lovers from all over the area converge on the area to experience "several unique art-oriented events that take place throughout Harbor Country, as stated on Art Attack's official website.

"Over the years Art Attack has gotten a well-deserved reputation as one of the Midwest's most eclectic, interactive celebrations of all that is art," the website states.

The event is "not just for art galleries" but also a "time to show the art form found in many of our Harbor Country's businesses. It is an opportunity for the business community to express their creativity in the things they do every day."

The weekend-long event features something for everyone: visual arts, music, fashion, culinary arts, literary arts, and architecture. There are also gallery receptions, artist's workshops, demonstrations, exhibitions, open houses, tours, visiting artists' studios, and more.

Art Attack not only heralds "the coming of spring, but it also provides a glimpse into new works by artists," allowing a "degree of interaction between artist and participant."

"People want that experience – to see artists' work, to talk to them, to get their hands dirty," said Rita who, along with Jennifer Cochran, owns Local Color Gallery in Union Pier and organizes the event.

Art Attack attendees who place their names, addresses and phone numbers in the Art Attack "paint cans" set out at participating establishments will be eligible to win gift baskets full of valuable prizes donated by area businesses. The lucky winners will be contacted after the drawing at the end of the weekend.

The winners of the lovely gift baskets full of valuable prizes that are donated by area businesses will be contacted after the weekend event. Enter at each participating establishment by placing your name, address, and phone number in the Art Attack paint can.

This year's event features 40 participating locations, which stretch from New Buffalo to Bridgman. For more details on each location and its respective events, visit www.michiganartattack.com. — STAFF REPORTS

FRIENDS OF BERRIEN COUNTY TRAILS ANNOUNCES "GIVE BACK TO THE TRAILS" CLEAN-UP EVENTS

Friends of Berrien County Trails (FOBCT) invites residents, businesses and outdoor enthusiasts to take part in a series of community trail clean-up events happening April 22–25, in celebration of Earth Day and Celebrate Trails Day.

The "Give Back to the Trails" initiative brings volunteers together across the county to help maintain and beautify Berrien County's growing trail network. Participants will assist with litter pickup, light maintenance, and general clean-up efforts to ensure trails remain safe, welcoming, and enjoyable for all.

Co-hosted with New Buffalo Township and Chikaming Township, a flexible, community-wide effort encourages residents and businesses to clean nearby trail sections, roadways, and properties at Red Arrow Trail/Marquette Greenway Wednesday, April 22. Supplies and refreshments are available at township halls from 9 to 11 a.m.

Co-hosted with Whirlpool Cycling Club, volunteers will clean sections of the Lakeview Mountain Bike Trail and the newly paved Lakeshore Trail from 4 to 6 p.m. April 22, at Monte Road Trailhead at 750 Monte Road in Benton Harbor.

Co-hosted with Friends of McCoy Creek Trail, volunteers will pick up litter and trim branches along the McCoy Creek Trail from 9:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, April 25, at Buchanan Common Stage at 121 S. Oak Street.

The Indiana Michigan River Valley / LaSalle and Riverside Trails Clean-Up will take place from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. April 25. Co-hosted with the City of Niles, Niles Charter Township, and Bike Michiana Coalition, this event spans multiple locations:

- Riverfront Park Amphitheatre (Niles, Michigan)
- Niles Township Hall (Niles, Michigan)
- Pinhook Park (South Bend, Indiana).

Participants are encouraged to bring gloves and tools if available; some supplies will be provided.

Community members can learn more about our mission and volunteer at www.berrientrails.org. — STAFF REPORTS

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